

Amendments to the Abstract

Please **add** the following Abstract to this application.

-- An apparatus for automatically selecting one of a standard decision directed ~~(dd)~~ mode and a soft dd mode in a decision feedback equalizer ~~(DFE)~~ for receiving a data signal includes an equalizer ~~(30)~~ utilizing forward error correction ~~(FEC)~~ for providing first and second output signals corresponding to a DFE automatic switching mode and a soft automatic switching mode, respectively, and a comparator ~~(36)~~ for comparing byte error rates ~~(ByER)~~ of the first and second output signals for selecting as a superior mode that mode associated with a lower ByER and outputting the output signal with the lower ByER. A lock detector ~~(30)~~ provides a lock signal derived from the DFE output signal with the lower ByER and a mode switch ~~(38)~~ selectively places the DFE outputs in one of the dd modes or a blind mode, depending on the lock signal. --